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IDAHO STUDENTS TO BEGIN TAKING SMARTER BALANCED FIELD TEST

BOISE – Beginning this week, students in public schools across Idaho will get to experience the new test that will replace the ISAT next year.

While Idaho will not officially transition to the new Smarter Balanced Assessment until next year, the state is conducting a Field Test of this new assessment for all students in grades 3-8 and 11 this spring.

A Field Test is an extended pilot, or “dress rehearsal,” that helps the state measure the validity and reliability of test questions. It also gives schools the opportunity to test their logistics in administering the new assessment and gives every student the opportunity to experience the new assessment.

Because it is just a Field Test, no scores will be given this year. Next year, the test will be fully implemented in all public schools, and scores will be given.

The state is implementing the new assessment because Idaho has transitioned to higher academic standards – known as the Idaho Core Standards – in mathematics and English language arts. Any time the state changes standards, it also must realign its year-end test to measure students against these higher standards.

“I am excited about the new Smarter Balanced Assessment because it is a better assessment tool to help measure a student’s critical-thinking and problem-solving skills,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said. “For years, parents and teachers have demanded more than a multiple-choice test. Whereas the ISAT was a stagnant, multiple-choice-only test, this new assessment provides multiple question types to better measure what a child knows and is able to do at the end of each grade level. This will greatly benefit students, parents, and teachers by providing a more accurate measure of how Idaho students are performing each year.”

Most school districts will begin administering the Field Test April 1, but some are starting as early as today. The state granted additional flexibility in the testing window this year to any school that wanted more time in scheduling the Field Test.

Idaho has collaborated with more than 20 other states to develop this year-end assessment, as well as assessment tools teachers can use in the classroom throughout the school year to monitor student progress. More than 100 educators from Idaho have participated in the development and review of assessment items, achievement level descriptors, and test specifications since 2011.

In addition, Superintendent Luna appointed the Smarter Balanced Advisory Committee, a group of superintendents, principals, teachers and other educators, to advise the State Department of Education throughout the Field Test.

Idaho has been phasing in the new Smarter Balanced Assessment to replace the ISAT over three years, including a pilot in 2013 and the Field Test this year.

For more information on Idaho Core Standards or the new Smarter Balanced Assessment, please visit <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/ICS/>.